JUSTICE LEAGUE

TASK FORCE™

JUSTICE LEAGUE TASK FORCE

24

JUN 95

PRIEST, VELLUTO & MCKENNA

'Till DEATH do us part!

Velluto Albrecht

BRIDE OF Chok

NEVER BEEN TO ROMANIA.

NEVER EVEN MET A REAL GYPSY.

BUT, HERE WE ARE. HERE HE IS.

AGAIN.

NOT MUCH OF A DECISION, REALLY--

PRIEST
writer

ED BENES **SAL VELLUTO**
pencillers

EMIR RIBEIRO **MARK STEGBAUER**
MARK McKENNA **RICH RANKIN**
inkers

KEVIN CUNNINGHAMN
letterer

ADRIENNE ROY
colorist

ALISANDE MORALES
assistant editor

RUBEN DIAZ
editor

--I'VE GOT TO KILL HIM.

HELLO, MY LOVE. IT'S BEEN QUITE AWHILE.

VON MAULER. HE'S CALLING HIMSELF BARON ÜMAN VON MAULER THESE DAYS.

SUPPOSE THAT'S BETTER THAN FATHER TIERNAY.

OR ANY OF THE OTHERS.

HE'S STILL VERY STRONG. STRONGER THAN ME.

I THOUGHT THE POUNDING L-RON GAVE HIM WOULD'VE WEAKENED HIM.

INSTEAD, IT'S ONLY MADE HIM ANGRIER.

PULLED HIM INTO MY CONSCIOUSNESS--TOO AFRAID TO PURSUE HIM INTO HIS. BUT HE ARRIVES WITH FOUR FRIENDS--VIRTUAL REALITY NINJAS--

--AND HE FORCES ME TO--ROMANIA. SOMEHOW...I KNOW THIS IS ROMANIA.

SOMEHOW, I KNOW THESE STREETS... THESE HOMES...

...I CAN READ THE SIGNS.

IS THERE SOMETHING TO THIS... SOMETHING MY SUBCONSCIOUS IS TRYING TO TELL ME--

--OR IS IT JUST COUNT CHOKULA SCREWING WITH MY HEAD--?

2

3

DEAL WITH IT LATER.

KEEP YOUR CENTER.

NOT FOURTEEN ANYMORE.

SHOW HIM.

BLOOD RUNS PRETTY WARM FOR A PSYCHIC BATTLE.

BLOOD--THEIRS AND MINE.

HE'S TRYING TO TRICK ME--FREAK ME OUT. LIKE MAYBE I WON'T KILL THEM.

LIKE MAYBE I WON'T KILL HIM.

HE'S WRONG ON BOTH COUNTS.

I'M A KILLER.

I AM WHAT HE MADE ME.

CHRIST. CAN'T BELIEVE IT. I RAN INTO HIM... IN PARIS...

...AND DIDN'T KNOW HIM...

INTERLUDE TWO: THE REUNION.

PLEASE FORGIVE MY FOOLISHNESS--

Oh, MY.

--I WAS NOT WATCHING WHERE I WAS GOING. ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, MISS-- MISS--?

FORGET IT.

ALL OF IT.

LOOK, I'M SORRY IF I WRINKLED YOUR NICE *HAT* AND ALL, BUT I'M REALLY NOT IN THE MOOD TO BE *DROOLED ON.*

I BELIEVE I HAVE BEEN MIS-INTERPRETED.

BET THAT HAPPENS TO YOU A LOT.

EXCUSE ME--

--I'VE GOT A *BUS* TO CATCH.

COMICS

JUST LET HIM WALK OFF.

NEVER REALIZING WHO HE WAS.. OR WHY J'ONN WAS KEEPING A FILE ON HIM.

JUST STUMBLED INTO HIS LIFE, AFTER SPENDING YEARS HIDING FROM HIM--

--WAIT-- THAT ONE-- THE SKULL GUY-- PULLING THE SWORD OUT--

--VON MAULER CHANGING THE RULES, NOW.

GOING TO GET VERY UGLY NOW.

TRIUMPH... YOU IDIOT...

INTERLUDE THREE: THE COURTSHIP

YOU HEARD ME. I JUST GOT *FELT UP* BY A MARTIAN.

RIDDLE ME *THAT*, BATMAN.

OUT

GYPSY-- THAT'S NOT J'ONN.

NO... REALLY? YOU THINK?!

OUT

SO DAMNED DISTRACTED--

GGRRAAAAHH!!

NO.

GOD--

--Oh MY GOD--!!

IF--IF I DIE HERE--IN MY MIND--

--I DIE FOR REAL.

THIS-- SWORD--

--KILLING ME--

--GOTTA GET IT OUT--

AAAAAHHHH--!!!

TRIUMPH WANTED TO PLAY A JOKE ON J'ONN... EXPOSE J'ONN'S "SECRET LIFE."

J'ONN DOESN'T HAVE ANY "SECRET LIFE." AND IF HE DOES--

--IT'S SECRET.

HIM.

VON MAULER IS HIM.

WE FOUND "VON MAULER" IN J'ONN'S PRIVATE FILES. WE COULDN'T FIGURE OUT WHAT HE WAS DOING THERE, SO TRIUMPH DECIDED "VON MAULER" HAD TO BE J'ONN.

HE MAY NEVER KNOW JUST HOW WRONG HE WAS--

--OR WHAT HIS MISTAKES COST ME.

AND NOW, HE'S FOUND ME.

THINGS HAVE GONE STRAIGHT TO HELL.

INTERLUDE FOUR: THE WEDDING.

Oh NO.

NO...NO...NO...

...THE MAN FROM THE STREET... GRABBED ME IN THE RESTAURANT...

DO NOT FEAR ME, MY LOVE.

I WAS *BORN* FOR YOU. YOU WERE BORN. FOR ME.

FATE HAS *JOINED* OUR PATHS--

...IT'S *HIM*. HE'S *FOUND* ME...

...Oh GOD...

DON'T PANIC. DON'T.

REMEMBER...

...IT'S JUST IN MY MIND.

THAT'S ALL...

...IT'S ONLY IN MY MIND.

--ONCE AGAIN.

WELCOME BACK, MY LOVE--

--MY DEAR, DEAR NAKIA.

HELLO! McFLY!! ANYBODY HOME?!

I'M *SAYING*, DOOF--

HISTORIC DUNCAN TAVERN

--MAYBE THIS VON MAULER GUY IS SOME KINDA WHACKO, OBSESSED WITH AN ANCIENT RELATIVE.

I'M *SAYING*, ANYTHING'S POSSIBLE.

I'M *SAYING*-- AND, GOD I DON'T EVEN LIKE *THINKING* IT--

--THAT COULD BE *GYPSY* DOWN THERE.

...JUST... MY *MIND*...

CHOK?

CHOK.

CHOK.

WELL, RAY, THERE BLOWS *THAT* THEORY--

YEAH. GUESS WE'RE BACK TO SQUARE ONE-- NO GYPSY AND NO CLUE.

AND, HEY I JUST DUG UP A DEAD GUY.

COOL.

SNAP!

SNAP!

GONE.

SO, L-RON, WHERE DID CHOK STASH GYPSY?

VON MAULER DOES NOT HAVE HER. I *MIND-MELDED* WITH VON MAULER. HE COULD KEEP *NO* SECRETS FROM ME.

...WANNA *BET*, STUPID?

MY GOD... HE'S *FOUND* ME...

...GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE.

BUT... J'ONN... YOU SAID YOU WERE *WATCHING--!*

I WAS.

WE MAY *NEVER* SEE GYPSY *AGAIN.*

J'ONN WAS WATCHING.

I HOPE THIS COMES CLOSE!

NAKIA, I HAVE NEVER SUFFERED PAIN LIKE THE PAIN OF NOT HAVING YOU.

J'ONN WAS WATCHING.

J'ONN WAS WATCHING!

HE KNEW. KNEW ABOUT HIM.

AND DID NOTHING TO HELP ME.

KEPT FILES ON HIM.

AND DID NOTHING TO HELP ME.

YES, J'ONN IS A MARTIAN. BUT HOW DOES HE JUSTIFY NOT HELPING ME? NOT EVEN WARNING ME?!

GUESS IT'S TOO EASY TO THINK OF HIM AS HUMAN.

EVERY NOW AND THEN HE JUST DOES SOMETHING... INEXPLICABLE.

SOMETHING YOU CAN'T FIGURE OUT.

SOMETHING YOU CAN'T FORGIVE.

DEAL WITH THAT LATER.

DEAL WITH THIS NOW.

NO, NAKIA.

NO, MY LOVE--

--YOU CAN'T KILL ME.

I CAN TRY.

KILL HIM...OR KILL MYSELF. EITHER WAY--

--THIS ENDS IT.

YOU'RE NOT STRONG ENOUGH. YOUR WILL IS NOT--

--IS NOT--

--NAKIA--

INTERLUDE ONE: THE MEETING.

NEVER TALK TO STRANGERS.

EVER.

WELL?

ON JOI

NEVER.

WELL, YOUNG LADY--?

NOT MUCH OF A *TALKER*, ARE YOU?

Y'KNOW, IF I DIDN'T KNOW ANY BETTER, I'D SAY YOU WERE A *RUNAWAY*.

YOU'RE NOT LEAVING *HOME*, ARE YOU NAKIA?

I THINK, NAKIA, THAT YOU AND I ARE GOING TO BE *FRIENDS*.

MY NAME'S NOT NAKIA. IT'S GYPSY.

YOUR MOTHER NAMED YOU GYPSY, NAKIA?

WHAT MY *MOTHER* NAMED ME DOESN'T COUNT. AND STOP CALLING ME "*NAKIA*."

DOUBT IT.

WHAAAMM

KEERASH!

SKREEEEEEE--

I HAVE WAITED A *LIFETIME* FOR YOU, NAKIA.

TODAY IS THE *FIRST DAY* OF OUR *TIME*.

YOUR ABILITY TO *CAMOUFLAGE* YOURSELF WITHIN YOUR SURROUNDINGS IS QUAINT AND USEFUL--

--HOWEVER, IT IS THE *MEREST PORTION* OF YOUR *TRUE* POWER.

THE POWER *WE* SHARE.

WE ARE *ONE*, NAKIA-- DESTINED.

AND DESTINY *MUST* BE *SERVED*--!

NAKIA... NAKIA...

UGGHMNNN...

--THE CAR-- I CUT MYSELF--

IT'S ALL RIGHT, NAKIA. YOU'RE SAFE.

WHY IS EVERYONE CALLING ME "NAKIA" ALL OF A SUD--

--YOU'RE WITH HIM, AREN'T YOU? THE OLD PRIEST!

GET AWAY FROM ME, YOU PERV!!

NAKIA-- YOU DON'T UNDER-STAND--

YOU ARE HIGH.

I LOVE YOU. I WAS CREATED FOR YOU.

I AM AN EMPATH NAKIA, UNIQUE AMONG CREATURES ON THIS PLANET--

--THAT IS, UNTIL I MET YOU.

HEY--! LET ME GO--!!

WE ARE TWO ALIKE, NAKIA...

...ALTHOUGH IT WILL TAKE QUITE SOME TIME FOR YOU TO FULLY REALIZE YOUR POTENTIAL.

TODAY I WILL SHOW YOU *SOME* OF THAT POTENTIAL.

THE *MEREST HINT* OF OUR *FUTURE LIFE* TOGETHER...

BON JOVI

NO.

STOP HIM.

SOMEBODY...

...STOP HIM... HE'S... HE'S...

...OH GOD!!

HELP ME!! PLEASE--!

SHE'S *CATATONIC.* GOING INTO SHOCK.

PAR...

NOT RESPONDING... I DON'T UNDER-STAND...

FORGET ABOUT *THIS* ONE--

--GRANDPA'S *TOAST.*

HELP ME!! STOP HIM!!

PARAMEDICS

PARAMEDICS

STOP!!

--NAKIA--

I CAN TRY.

KILL HIM... OR KILL MYSELF. EITHER WAY--

YYEEEAARRRGHH!!

YOU HEAR SOME-THING?

SOUNDED LIKE CHOKULA.

MAN, I WISH THOSE SLAB SPECIAL FORCES GUYS WOULD COME PICK HIM UP ALREADY !

WITH TRIUMPH GONE WHO-KNOWS-WHERE AND J'ONN GONE TO FIND GYPSY--

I WOULD NOT CONCERN MYSELF WITH VON MAULER, RAY.

L-RON-- DON'T OPEN THAT--

I ASSURE YOU, IT'S QUITE SAFE. I HAVE BEEN CONSTANTLY SCANNING VON MAULER SINCE HIS ARREST.

HE HAS ENGAGED IN A HIGH LEVEL OF PSYCHIC ACTIVITY, CULMINATING WITH SOME MANNER OF OVERLOAD--

LEAVING VON MAULER QUITE DEAD.

Oh, NO...

"...HOW ARE WE GONNA EXPLAIN *THIS* TO J'ONN--?"

CAN'T SAY I DIDN'T *EXPECT* YOU.

WON'T SAY I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU.

SORRY ABOUT THE INTRUSION, *BRONZE TIGER.* I WAITED AS LONG AS I COULD.

IT'S ALL RIGHT, J'ONN--I SUPPOSE I SHOULD CALL YOU "MR. JONES," SINCE YOU'RE WEARING YOUR *HUMAN* FACE--

REALLY NEED TO SEE HER.

SURE.

SO...

...YOU WON.

SURE DID, J'ONN.

THANKS FOR THE HELP.

I KNEW HE'D COME FOR YOU ONE DAY. THAT'S WHY I KEPT A FILE ON HIM.

THAT'S WHY I WANTED YOU IN THE TASK FORCE.

THAT'S WHY YOU LET HIM... LET HIM...

GYPSY-- *YOU* HAD TO BEAT HIM. YOU HAD TO DO IT YOURSELF.

THAT'S SUCH BULL.

YOU'RE A *TELEPATH*, J'ONN. YOU *KNEW*. YOU *KNEW* WHERE I WAS AND WHAT WAS *HAPPENING* TO ME.

I ALSO KNEW YOU COULDN'T RUN FROM HIM FOREVER.

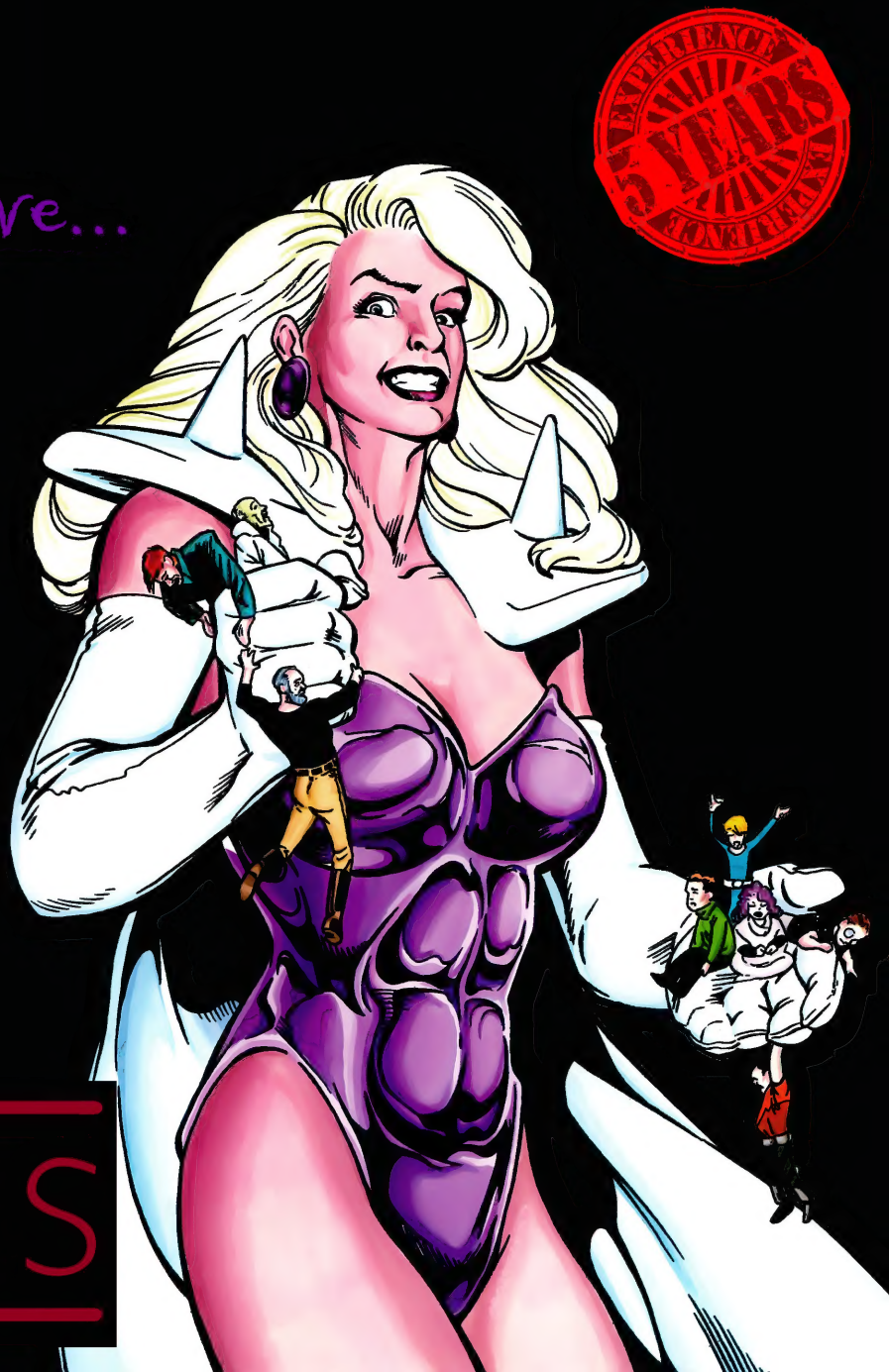
TRIUMPH'S SETTING UP A *NEW HEADQUARTERS* FOR US. IT SHOULD BE OPERATIONAL IN ABOUT A WEEK.

I HOPE YOU'LL ANSWER MY CALL.

...

End

From Baaldur, with love...



GLORITH

novus